GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COAL AND MINES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:557
ANSWERED ON:09.07.2004
PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Kamat Shri Gurudas

Will the Minister of COAL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether coal companies do not pay adequate attention to the protection of the environment;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken/propose to be taken by the Government to ensure proper protection of the environment?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COAL AND MINES (DR. D. NARAYANA RAO)

(a) & (b) : No, Sir. The coal companies pay adequate attention to the protection of the environment.

(C) : The following measures are being taken by the coal companies to protect the environment:-

- Preparation of Environment Management Plan (EMP):- Before starting the operation of a mine, a well designed EMP is prepared backed by the environmental impact assessment (EIA). The EMP is supported by the base line data generated for the project site. Approval of the EMP by Ministry of Environment & Forests is a precondition for approval of project. Regular monitoring of implementation of the provisions of the EMP is done as per requirement of MoEF and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs). During the operation of a mine the following mitigatory measures are also taken:-

- Topsoil preservation:- meticulous excavation of the topsoil, its storing and use during plantation in the reclaimed area is being done in the opencast mines wherever applicable. Collection of topsoil and its reuse for the plantation in reclaimed area is followed as a routine job.

- Tree plantation is a traditional activity in coal mines. Every year in the big opencast mines around 50 lakh saplings are planted on OB dumps, reclaimed back filled areas, empty lands and avenues.

- Air pollution − Action are being taken for suppression of dust in the opencast mines which includes, installation of dust extractors in drills in opencast mines, commissioning mobile and static water sprinklers in haul roads, black topping of coal transportation roads, plantation along avenues and enclosing conveyor belts.

- Water pollution: efforts are being made to make all types of discharges from the mine to have environmental parameters within acceptable limits before these are discharged to the natural watercourse. Arrangements are also made in some of the projects to reuse the treated effluents from the workshops within the mine itself to have near zero discharge. The efforts include commissioning oil and grease traps in the excavation workshops to make discharges free from oil & grease, commissioning sedimentation ponds for mine discharges, commissioning integrated effluent treatment plants to deal with workshop, mine as well as coal handling plant discharges in big mines, commissioning sewage treatment plants to deal with the domestic effluents and construction of bunds and catch drains around Over Burden dumps.

- Noise pollution: noise level is regularly monitored in day as well as night hours at pre-fixed monitoring stations to assess the noise level. Action is taken to reduce the noise level when ever necessary.

- Blasting vibration: whenever there is habitation within 500 meter from the mine, vibration monitoring of blasting operation is done and blasting operation is controlled accordingly to keep the vibration level within permissible limit.

- Environmental Monitoring : air, water & noise samples are collected as per standard at pre-fixed stations at regular interval as prescribed by laws to find out the level of pollution and efficacy of the mitigatory measures adopted. Blasting vibrations are measured as per Director General Mines Safety (DGMS) guidelines in the opencast mines, water level in the wells in and around the mining activity area are measured regularly to find out effect of mining on ground water, if any. As per result of monitoring, the environmental parameters are normally within acceptable range and whenever any deviation is detected, actions are initiated to normalize the situations.

- Land pollution: During mining operation itself all non- active external Over Burden dumps are reclaimed and plantation is done extensively with different variety of samplings including medical plants. Voids are backfilled with overburden simultaneously as the mine progresses.

- After the mine is exhausted, all the reclaimed land (filled with OB/top soil) is covered with dense plantation. Recently a few of the reclaimed sites are being used for growing paddy/vegetable crops/medicinal plants by the project affected people. Some left out voids are converted into water reservoir which becomes source of water for domestic use and fisheries for the habitats who continue to live after the mine is closed.